

and Religious Instruction in Schools is the rock on which every attempt hitherto made in England to establish a Public System of Elementary Education has been broken to pieces*; and the means of solving this question occupied my most earnest inquiries for more than a year in various Countries in Europe, and some States in America. The results of those enquiries, not as embodied in the theoretical discussions, but as practically developed in both Roman Catholic and Protestant countries, are stated in my *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada*, pages 22—52.

1. Regulations for Religious Instruction in our Common Schools.

In harmony with what is there stated, I have endeavoured to develop this most important and, at the same time, most difficult department, of our Common School System. With this view the Sixth Section of the Sixth Chapter of the *Forms and Regulations* was prepared, headed *Constitution and Government of Schools, in respect to Religious Instruction*;—a section which was submitted to both the Protestant and Roman Catholic Bishops of Toronto, as well as to other Clergymen, before its final adoption; and to which no candid Roman Catholic can object, and more than which no enlightened Protestant can reasonably desire.† In the same spirit, I addressed a Circular to the Common School Trustees, containing the following counsels and expositions of the Law on this subject:—

On the all-important subject of the Constitution and Government Schools, in respect to Religious Instruction, I desire to refer you to the Forms, Regulations, etcetera, Chapter II., Section 6. The School Law carefully guards against any interference with the rights of conscience, by expressly providing that "no child shall be compelled to read any religious book, or to join in any exercise of devotion to which his or her parents or guardians shall object." But, by this restriction, the Law assumes that which has been considered by many as above civil authority to enact,—which has been enjoined by Divine Authority,—the provision for Religious Exercises and Instruction in the Schools. The Government does not assume the function of religious instructor; it confines itself to the more appropriate sphere of securing the facilities of Religious Instruction by those, whose proper office it is to provide for and communicate it. The extent and manner, in which this shall be introduced and maintained in each School, is left to the Trustees of each School,—the chosen guardians of the Christian educational interests of the youth in each School Section. If Trustees employ a drunken, a profane, or an immoral, Teacher, they act as anti-Christian enemies, rather than as Christian guardians of the youth of a Christian Country; and, if the atmosphere of Christianity does not pervade the School, on the Trustees chiefly must rest the responsibility. On the fidelity with which this trust is fulfilled by School Trustees are suspended, to a great extent, the destinies of Upper Canada.

2. Nature of the Religious Instruction given in our Common Schools.

Thus maintaining inviolately the principles of Christianity, as the basis of our Educational System, each School Municipality, or Section, is authorized to provide, according to its own judgment, the nature and extent of the Religious Exercises and Instruction that shall be observed and given in the School. I am not aware of a single complaint on this subject; and the extent to which the Holy Scriptures are used in the Schools indicates the character both of the people and of the system. It is true, that those who wish the Common Schools to be the handmaid of one, or more, of the

*It was not until 1870 that an Act was passed, establishing an Elementary School System in England.

†The Regulations, in regard to Religious Instruction in the Common Schools, will be found on pages 299, 300 of the Sixth Volume of the Documentary History of Education in Ontario.

‡The particulars of this consultation, in regard to Religious Instruction in the Schools, are given on page 79 of the Ryerson Memorial Volume, 1889.